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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SENATOR CRISTOVAM BUARQUE

Classified By: Political Counselor Dennis W. Hearne for reasons 1.4 b a  
nd d.

¶1. (C) Summary. Ambassador Sobel met with Senator Cristovam Buarque (Democratic Workers Party ) Pernambuco state) on November 30 at the Senate. They discussed educational issues, Buarque's differences with President Lula, the composition of the second term government coalition, and the imminent ministries shake-up. Buarque could not predict the result of the shake-up, but said there is no chance the PSDB would enter the government coalition. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador, accompanied by poloffs, paid a courtesy call on Senator Cristovam Buarque on November 30 at his office. The wide-ranging discussion touched on the upcoming visit to Brazil of Jeffrey Sachs (Buarque was involved in Sachs,s last visit), the upcoming 50th Anniversary of Brazil,s Fulbright program, and a number of political issues.

¶3. (C) Buarque, who was a leading member of president Lula's Workers Party (PT) and was Education Minister in Lula's first term before breaking with him with him, told the Ambassador that he and Lula "went separate ways" because Lula did not share Buarque's view that the way to abolish poverty was through basic education. He said Lula is not interested in basic education because Lula is oriented toward labor unions, and "illiterates have no union." He said he is occasionally in touch with the president by telephone, but the relationship has not been repaired.

¶4. (C) Buarque said his party, the Democratic Workers Party, will almost certainly join the government coalition, although he opposes such a move. Buarque said he believes that a large coalition concentrates too much power in the government, and he fears too much government control. He offered Hugo Chavez's Venezuela as an example to be avoided.

¶5. (C) Buarque said there is no chance the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party) would join the coalition, citing internal disputes within the party on which he did not elaborate. (Note: The PSDB allied with other parties to challenge Lula in this year,s national elections. While these opposition parties achieved a slight majority in the Senate, the government coalition will retain its majority in the Chamber of Deputies.)

¶6. (C) On the cabinet shake-up, he could not predict the outcome. Buarque, who said he hopes to become chairman of the Senate Education committee, said he also could not predict whether Education Minister Haddad will stay on. He said the coalition had to take more shape before it would be apparent how the shake-up would come out, but he did say Lula will have fewer "friends" around him, suggesting greater attention to technical competence and maintaining his

multi-party coalition.

SOBEL